

Town Meeting Coordinating Committee

Meeting of Wednesday, June 9, 2010

Bangs Community Center, Glass Room

Attendance: Peggy Roberts, Nonny Burack, Adrienne Terrizzi, Rob Crowner, Dorwenda Bynum-Lewis (emerita), Mary Streeter (arrived 1:16), Harry Brooks (arrived 1:22), Carol Gray (arrived 1:54).

1. Call to order: Peggy calls the meeting to order at 1:08. The committee welcomes new member Adrienne and thanks outgoing member Dorwenda. Reorganization of the committee and officer elections will take place at the next meeting.

2. Minutes: Mary moves, Nonny seconds, and the committee unanimously approves minutes of the meetings of April 23, May 4, and May 14, 2010. Nonny will contact members of the League of Women Voters who were involved with the drafting of the Town Government Act to follow up on the reasoning behind certain provisions discussed in the meeting of May 14.

3. Event evaluations: Electronic voting demonstration surveys revealed widespread dissatisfaction with the sound system in the Middle School auditorium. Noting that the Town Room was recently rewired with the assistance of ACTV, Adrienne and Nonny volunteer to look into the matter and bring back a report. Peggy expresses a preference for a wireless system, if feasible.

a. Informational forum: Evaluations were mostly positive, though some would have liked more time for questions from the audience. Dorwenda recommends promoting the call-in option in future event publicity efforts, and Nonny suggests advertising on radio stations WHMP and WMUA.

b. Bus tour: It has been proposed that filming of bus tour stops take place separately from the bus tour itself, though Peggy notes that it would add a lot of time to the editing process. Harry states that ACTV would like there to be more people capable of handling video production. Harry offers to organize the recruitment of Town Meeting members and high school students to assist ACTV at TMCC events.

Dorwenda states that new members seem to have difficulty understanding everything happening during the bus tour in part because of the plethora of side conversations going on. In addition, they don't always have the background to evaluate the expertise and perspective of speakers. Mary states that the informal, back-and-forth nature of the discussion helps illuminate issues that might not otherwise be clear. Peggy states that bus tour attendees should be able to trust what the invited "experts" are saying; advocacy is not appropriate for a TMCC event.

Mary suggests that some stops should be identified as optional on the bus tour itinerary so that it does not seem like important information is being skipped if there is not enough time for everything. Carol states that she has prepared "How to run a bus tour" instructions to assist the committee over the next year.

c. TMCC elections: Stating that the TMCC elections happen too late in Town Meeting, Adrienne recommends that the committee look into whether something can be done about it. Mary states that the election is conducted by the Town Clerk's office, which makes coordination tricky. Carol proposes communicating the committee's concerns to the Clerk and the Moderator and meeting with them and the committee's Select Board liaison early in the year (e.g., January) to clarify the process.

4. Electronic voting: Mary and Adrienne present the results of the survey distributed at the electronic voting demonstration and via the Town Meeting listserv, cautioning that the numbers should be interpreted carefully. In particular, it is not obvious how to count the "Yes, if" responses. Comments were focused on cost, speed, accuracy, accountability, and technical problems. A majority of the "Yes, if" responses were cost-related. Mary states that some respondents may have been confused by the question about tally voting

and speculates that tech-savvy Town Meeting members may be overrepresented in returned surveys, though Adrienne notes that close to half of the body did return surveys, a good rate.

Adrienne observes that the raw numbers might suggest interest, but the comments indicate that it might be too soon to commit to bringing forward an article. Harry states that the Moderator has given the impression that he is taking the initiative in this matter, though Carol is hopeful that the committee has persuaded him to make it a collaborative effort. It is speculated that the Moderator could proceed with a bylaw change article without also requesting immediate adoption of electronic voting.

Mary states that Wayland's electronic voting article was motivated by privacy concerns and was ultimately amended to call for a free trial run next Spring. The sponsor of the Wayland article has offered to speak to people in Amherst working on electronic voting. Peggy notes that the difference between open town meeting and representative town meeting will affect consideration of electronic voting.

Noting that the purchase of an electronic voting system would have to go out to bid and that negotiation may result in a lower price, Harry suggests conducting another demonstration with a different system. Peggy suggests holding such a demonstration at the *beginning* of a Town Meeting session. Adrienne suggests gathering more data, such as time spent voting and the costs of different options, including status quo. Carol recommends drafting a report describing the issues, to help guide the process.

Mary suggests making an effort to reduce the expense of printing tally cards and improving the audio and visual experience of Town Meeting as a first priority. She also advocates taking energy costs into consideration before making any recommendation.

Peggy suggests that the committee organize its response before inviting the Moderator and others to discuss this issue further. Mary, Adrienne, Harry, and Rob volunteer to begin work on producing a report based on the survey results and comments received.

5. Summer projects: Dorwenda promises to continue assisting the committee by printing Town Meeting packet stickers.

Carol suggests inviting a member of the Climate Action Committee to advise Town Meeting in ways to go green.

Carol announces that she plans to continue participating in meetings (via Skype) and contributing to the committee's work effort where possible while she is away during the upcoming academic year. New revisions to the Open Meeting Law will permit virtual attendance at public meetings.

6. Next meeting: The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 15 at 4:30 in the Bangs Center.

7. Adjournment: The meeting is adjourned at 3:10.

Respectfully submitted,
Rob Crowner

Documents distributed at the meeting:

1. agenda
2. draft minutes of meetings of 4/23, 5/4, and 5/14.